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—*Christian Science Monitor*

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## History of Russia: From Peter the Great to Gorbachev

(36 lectures, 30 minutes/lecture)  
Course No. 8380

Taught by **Mark Steinberg**  
University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign  
Ph.D., University of California at Berkeley

**It's** difficult to imagine a nation whose history is more compelling for Americans than that of Russia.

Before the collapse of the Soviet Union, this was the nation against which we measured our own nation's values and power and with whom war, if it ever came, could spell unimaginable catastrophe for our planet.

Yet many Americans have never had the opportunity to study Russia in any kind of depth and to see how the forces of history came together so ironically to shape a future so very different from the dreams of most ordinary Russian people, eager to see their nation embrace Western values of progress, human rights, and justice.

**Course Formats**

<b>DVD</b>	\$374.95	<a href="#">ADD TO CART</a>
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**Should I Buy Audio or Video?**

This course works well in any format. The DVD version includes 260 images, including 10 maps, as well as hundreds of on-screen texts. In every format, the superb lecture outlines Professor Steinberg has prepared include a glossary of Russian words and terms with detailed information for each entry.

### Course Lecture Titles

1. Understanding the Russian Past
2. The Russia of Peter the Great's Childhood
3. Peter the Great's Revolution
4. The Age of Empresses—Catherine the Great
5. Social Rebellion—The Purgachev Uprising
6. Moral Rebellion—Nikolai Novikov
7. Alexander I—Imagining Reform
8. The Decembrist Rebellion
9. Nicholas I—Orthodoxy, Autocracy, Nationality
10. Alexander Pushkin, Russia's National Poet
11. The Birth of the Intelligentsia
12. Westernizers—Vissarion Belinski

### Poets, Politicians, Workers, Thinkers: History through Biography

In this course with Professor Mark Steinberg you examine the last 300 years of Russian history through the eyes of its people.

You find historical themes made clear not by discussing treaties or war declarations or economic statistics but by examining the lives and ideas of the men and women who, in fact, were Russia.

Professor Steinberg is one of this country's leading specialists on Russia and its culture. He is Director of the Russian and East European Center, designated as a national resource center by the Department of Education. He is a recent winner of an Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching Award from the University of Illinois. In these 36 lectures he brings alive the themes and ideas that have shaped Russia's passionate and often tormented story and equips you to better interpret contemporary events.

"Russia's history," says Professor Steinberg, "is a story of people's efforts to discern life's fundamental meaning, as well as a story of their uncertainty and confusion. It is a story of people's efforts to create a society built on principles of right and justice, as well as a story of evil and injustice. It is a story about human imagination and creativity, as well as a story of great tragedy."

You meet tsars, emperors, Communist party leaders, writers, artists, peasants, and factory workers.

Art, passion, brilliant thinking, high society, and joy all thrived amidst political upheaval and years of uprisings, terror, and war. Professor Steinberg:

- Analyzes ideas of power from the viewpoint of both rulers and the ruled
- Brings alive the vibrant Russian imagination, one so willing to visualize a different kind of

13. Alexander II and the Great Reforms
14. "Nihilists"
15. Populists and Marxists
16. Paths to Revolution—Lenin and Martov
17. Lev Tolstoy
18. The Reign of Alexander III
19. Nicholas II, The Last Tsar
20. The Revolution of 1905
21. Peasant Life and Culture
22. The Modern City and Its Discontents
23. Fin-de-Siècle Culture—Decadence and Iconoclasm
24. Fin-de-Siècle Culture—The Religious Renaissance
25. War and Revolution
26. Democratic Russia—1917
27. Bolsheviks in Power
28. Civil War
29. Paths to Socialism—the 1920s
30. Joseph Stalin
31. Stalin's Revolution
32. Joy and Terror—Society and Culture in the 1930s
33. The "Great Patriotic War"
34. The Soviet Union After Stalin
35. Private and Public Dissidence
36. Mikhail Gorbachev—*Perestroika* and *Glasnost*

life for the country yet so burdened by its darker sides of doubt and pessimism that those visions were rejected

- Discusses the theme of happiness and its pursuit that resonates throughout Russian history, along with ideas of morality and ethics as wielded by both the Russian State and its critics.

Professor Steinberg draws on his own years of experience as an author, a student in the Soviet Union in the 1980s, and, more recently, as a world-class historian granted access to once-secret government archives.

### Russia's Rich History: "A Riddle Wrapped in an Enigma"

Professor Steinberg quotes from stories written by newspaper reporters of the day, memoirs of young idealists striving to change their nation, verses of protest from poets, and descriptions of people flocking to rapidly changing public places as new styles of architecture begin to reflect a society's evolving values.

The result is history as it happens to Russian serfs, close to starvation on their barely viable plots of land ... to newly urbanized factory workers, crowded with their families into pitifully small single rooms ... to desperate soldiers, battling house-to-house on the bloody streets of Stalingrad.

Events unfold as the consequences of powerful historical forces now understood from the perspective we have been granted by time.

The result is that you can set aside Churchill's famous description of Russia as "a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma" and replace it with an understanding of why Russia became what it did and what its future may hold.

### People You Meet

You meet some of the people you expect to encounter in any course in Russian history, and some you may not know, including:

- *Peter the Great*, whose achievements in transforming a still-backward Russia into a powerful nation with a European-style civilization matched his extraordinary 6-foot-7 stature, but whose ever-present and constantly wielded club was a constant reminder of his capacity for cruelty and violence
- *Vladimir Lenin*, the Bolshevik revolutionary whose general disinterest in political or social questions changed forever on the day he witnessed the public hanging of his brother, accused of plotting the attempted assassination of Tsar Alexander III
- *Joseph Stalin*, the dominant Russian leader whose bloody future could not possibly have been envisioned on the day he began his studies as a young seminarian
- *Grand Prince Vladimir*, the 10th-century ruler who sent emissaries to the Muslim Bulgars, the Catholic Holy Roman Empire, and the Eastern Orthodox Church in Constantinople to help him determine what religion Russia should adopt
- *Emelian Pugachev*, the disgruntled former Don Cossack and military deserter whose leadership of a violent 1772 peasant rebellion claimed the lives of 30,000 landlords and officials
- *Petr Lavrov*, whose 1869–70 *Historical Letters* helped articulate the Russian idea of *lichnost*, a humanistic concern for individual rights and dignity
- *Alexander Pushkin*, the "national poet" so mythologized after he died in a duel that people tried to clip pieces of his hair and clothing as his body lay in state
- *Lev Tolstoy*, author of *War and Peace* and his nation's public voice of conscience, whose life begun in wealth and privilege ended in poverty, religious pilgrimage, and a lingering death in a trainmaster's humble rooms as all of Russia watched in sorrow.

You meet rural peasants, clinging to the idea of community as security in a harsh world.

You meet working-class poets in the city, whose heartfelt stanzas vividly portrayed the pain of their daily lives.

And you meet Alexei Stakhanov, a Stalin-era coal miner whose increased personal productivity during the era of industrial glorification and five-year plans made him a national ideal and gave a name—*Stakhanovism*—to new government incentives such as additional material wealth and leisure time for productive workers.

### The Flavor of Russia and What Lies Ahead

Professor Steinberg's major themes include the role of religion in Russian life, the competing ideas of individual freedom versus the strength of the State, and the Russian image.

You learn about the Decembrist rebellion of 1825, the Revolution of 1905, and Russia's brief and failed attempt at democratic government in the months before Lenin and the Bolsheviks seized

control.

How was it possible for the Soviet Union to recover from the disastrous beginning of World War II, when—only five months into the war—40 percent of the USSR was under German occupation and *two million* troops were already imprisoned?

To say that Russia used the idea of a "Great Patriotic War" to unite the nation as never before is one thing. To see why that was even *possible*, and what it would later mean to the idea of the Church in Russia, for example, or to the population's post-war political and social expectations, is a different issue entirely.

You look at Mikhail Gorbachev's efforts to make Communism work through a policy of reform. The final lecture concludes by considering the situation left in the wake of the collapse of Communism.

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